

PART 121-7: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR RHODE ISLAND'S FUTURE LAND USE

7-1 Plan Implementation

This part outlines a framework of objectives and strategies for realizing the plan's vision for Rhode Island in 2025. Under the goals for Greenspace, Community Design, Infrastructure and Implementation, a total of twenty-five major objectives and nearly ninety specific strategies have been established. A summary of goals and objectives is provided here. Table 121-07(1) lists the goals and objectives together with their related strategies. The table identifies the key agents, and a lead agent, for each strategy. Strategies have been identified as having a short-term, long-term, or ongoing nature.

7-2 Summary of Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal is a *Rhode Island that is beautiful, diverse, connected, and compact*. The supporting objectives are to:

Build the Greenspace and Greenways network

1. Permanently protect critical natural resources.
2. Upgrade and maintain urban and community greenspace.
3. Provide a diverse, well-balanced system of public outdoor recreation facilities.
4. Use greenspace to shape urban development patterns.
5. Strengthen and implement land use controls to protect shoreline areas.

Attain excellence in community design

1. Focus growth in centers of different sizes and types; support traditional centers over new development.
2. Promote traditional neighborhoods, near to centers.
3. Preserve and enhance special districts and special places, supporting particular uses and resources.
4. Maintain and protect rural character.
5. Require a diverse, affordable housing stock.
6. Focus development of major employment centers.
7. Use well-designed public facilities and properties as models.

Develop first class supporting infrastructure

1. Maintain fully functional public water and sewer systems; focus development to maximize the investment in these community assets.
2. Protect drinking water supply resources.

3. Avoid or mitigate significant negative environmental impacts.
4. Map priority service expansion area.
5. Promote intermodal centers and greater reliance on transit.
6. Provide pedestrian connections through all centers and urban districts.
7. Maintain the functional integrity of existing and planned roadways.

Implement and maintain the vision

1. Reform Rhode Island's property tax system.
2. Require clear and current land use plans, and coordinated regulations to attain land use goals on a statewide, regional and community level.
3. Develop and maintain excellent land use information and technology systems.
4. Ensure that state and municipal planning officials are well-trained and properly supported.
5. Update the state-enabling legislation, as necessary, to maintain the contemporary and responsive foundation for state and municipal land management decisions.
6. Achieve greater integration of state and municipal planning systems and support regional efforts.

| Part VII: Objectives and Strategies for Rhode Island's Future Land Use | | | | |
|--|----|---|------------------------|-------------|
| The Greenspace System | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
| Goal | I. | Build the Greenspace and Greenways Network. | | |
| Objective | A. | Permanently protect critical natural resources. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Identify and prioritize the most critical Greenspace resources, rural and urban. | M/DEM/WRB/DOH/CRMC/SPP | ST |
| | 2 | Aggressively pursue protection of identified critical natural resource areas. | M/DEM/CRMC | LT |
| | 3 | Protect existing open space from conversion to other uses. | M/DEM/CRMC/DOT/SPCOM | O |
| | 4 | Establish a permanent system for funding and for technical assistance for Greenspace protection. | GOV/GA/DEM | ST |
| | 5 | Develop and maintain a Statewide Future Greenspace Network Map. | DEM/SPP/M | O |
| Objective | B. | Upgrade and maintain urban and community Greenspace. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Require significant landscaping in all publicly-funded projects. | M/DOT/SPCOM | O |
| | 2 | Upgrade landscape requirements in municipal development regulations. | M | O |
| | 3 | Enhance community and regional Greenspace connections during the municipal development review process. | M | O |
| | 4 | Maintain effective vegetated buffers and landscape treatments along the edges of all highways, roads, and streets. | M/DOT | O |
| Objective | C. | Provide a diverse, well-balanced system of public outdoor recreation facilities. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Preserve and expand opportunities for public access to natural resources and recreation facilities. | M/DEM/CRMC | LT/O |
| | 2 | Maintain and expand the state and local network of trails and pedestrian paths, in natural and built areas. | M/DEM/CRMC/DOT | LT/O |
| | 3 | Strengthen and expand community-based opportunities for open space and outdoor recreation, particularly in urban areas. | M/DEM | LT/O |
| Objective | D. | Use Greenspace to shape urban development patterns. | M/DEM | LT/O |
| Objective | E. | Strengthen and implement land use controls to protect shoreline areas. | M/CRMC | ST |

| *Lead Agency Legend | |
|---------------------|--|
| Abbreviations | Agencies |
| CRMC | Coastal Resources Management Council |
| DEM | Department of Environmental Management |
| DOA | Department of Administration |
| DOH | Department of Health |
| DOT | Department of Transportation |
| EDC | Economic Development Corporation |
| GA | General Assembly |
| GOV | Governor |
| GSRI | Grow Smart RI |
| HRC | Housing Resources Commission |
| M | Municipalities |
| RIAPA | RI American Planning Association |
| RIH | RI Housing |
| RIPEC | RI Public Expenditure Council |
| RIPTA | RI Public Transit Authority |
| SPCOM | State Properties Committee |
| SPP | Statewide Planning Program |
| WRB | Water Resources Board |

| **Timeline Definitions | | |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Term Length | Abbreviations | Definitions |
| Short Term | ST | 0 - 5 Years |
| Long Term | LT | 6 - 10 Years |
| On-going | O | On-going |

| Part VII: Objectives and Strategies for Rhode Island's Future Land Use | | | | |
|--|----|---|----------------|-------------|
| Community Design | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
| Goal | I. | Attain excellence in community design. Promote Rhode Island communities that consist of high quality, energy-efficient, safe, and aesthetically pleasing structures. City and town centers and neighborhoods, should be sensitive to the identity and special character of local places, provide economic opportunities, and enhance historic and cultural resources while maintaining a healthful, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing and human-scaled environment. | | |
| Objective | A. | Focus growth in centers of different sizes and types; support traditional centers over new development. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | The State should prioritize investments to state approved growth centers. | M/SPP/GOV | LT/O |
| | 2 | The State and municipalities should identify the most important or viable existing centers within Rhode Island, and the character and activities of each center. | M/SPP | ST |
| | 3 | Scrutinize the undeveloped areas currently planned for commercial, industrial, and mixed uses and consider their viability as new centers, to provide for major new land use needs, particularly multi-family housing and community facilities. | M | ST |
| | 4 | Promote the preparation and adoption of strategic plans for growth center redevelopment as recommended by the Governor's Growth Planning Council and as provided for in the Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan. | M/SPP | ST |
| | 5 | Coordinate state and municipal efforts to contain sprawl. | M/SPP/GSRI | ST |
| | 6 | Focus future growth within areas identified as suitable through the geographic analysis of this plan. | M/SPP | ST |
| Objective | B. | Promote traditional neighborhoods, near growth centers. (Note: Traditional neighborhoods are generally residential areas with a mixture of housing types, with public water and sewer service, sidewalk and transit connections and house lots of one-half acre or less.) | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Promote the preparation and adoption of neighborhood-based strategic plans to accomplish revitalization, redevelopment, and development of new neighborhoods. | M | ST |
| | 2 | Identify existing traditional residential neighborhoods and accessory uses such as shopping, open space areas, and transit connections. | M | ST |
| | 3 | Identify areas suitable for new traditional residential neighborhoods within the state's public water service areas, adjacent to centers and other residential neighborhoods, and also adjacent to rural village centers. | M/WRB | ST |
| | 4 | Promote infill and redevelopment within existing neighborhoods in areas which are underutilized or where larger replacement structures would be appropriate. | M | LT/O |
| Objective | C. | Preserve and enhance special districts and special places, supporting particular uses and resources. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Identify special districts or special places, and define their character, functions, and contributing features. | M | ST |
| | 2 | Evaluate the extent to which existing land use plans, regulations, and capital improvement projects provide for preservation and improvements to the special district. | M | ST |
| | 3 | Promote the preparation and adoption of "Special District Improvement Plans" and revise land use regulations to be consistent with the plans. | M/EDC | ST |

| Community Design <i>(continued)</i> | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
|-------------------------------------|----|---|----------------|-------------|
| Objective | D. | <i>Maintain and protect rural character.</i> | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Identify existing rural centers, villages, mill complexes, and special districts; define their character, contributing elements, and active uses. | M | ST |
| | 2 | Evaluate assets and constraints and the extent to which the existing centers contain potential sites for new development within or adjacent to the centers. | M | ST |
| | 3 | Promote clustering of new development into much denser concentrations and adjacent to existing rural centers or existing neighborhoods. | M | ST |
| | 4 | Protect the character of rural roads, areas, and important vistas through land use controls, such as deep frontage setbacks and configuration of open space in new developments. | M | ST |
| | 5 | Develop and apply zoning techniques appropriate for conservation of fragile or important resources. | M | ST |
| | 6 | Develop plans for existing undeveloped areas as future neighborhoods or centers or reserves. Revise land use regulations to be consistent with the plans. | M | LT |
| | 7 | Locate small-scaled convenience shopping uses, as well as community and institutional facilities within or adjacent to rural centers. Ensure that zoning requirements for such uses/areas provide designs that are compatible with the scale and character of rural environments. | M | O |
| Objective | E. | <i>Require a diverse, affordable housing stock.</i> | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Preserve the existing affordable housing stock, both publicly subsidized and market units. | HRC/RIH/M | O |
| | 2 | Identify good potential sites for higher density housing, considering capacity for water and sewer service as well as transit | HRC/SPP/M | ST |
| | 3 | Provide examples of high-density residential development that complements community design standards. | HRC | ST |
| Objective | F. | <i>Focus development of major employment centers.</i> | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Maintain a current inventory of industrial and commercial space that serves to maximize the employment and public investment in existing major employment centers. | EDC | O |
| | 2 | When necessary to develop new sites, to maintain an adequate inventory of industrial land, such efforts should be promoted on a regional basis and provide for regional financing and tax sharing. | EDC | O |
| Objective | G. | <i>Use well-designed public facilities and properties as models.</i> | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Upgrade existing state and municipal facilities in terms of functionality and community design. Treat them as landmarks and anchors within the communities and centers where they are located. | M/SPCOM | O |
| | 2 | Maximize the potential of existing public facilities and properties through optimum use, good maintenance, creative re-use, and inclusion of "Green Building" features. | M/SPCOM | O |
| | 3 | Locate new public facilities, in or near to urban or rural centers, and insure good transit and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods. | SPCOM/DOA | O |
| | 4 | Develop special district plans for each state reservation, including government centers, universities, and major employment centers. Plans should include use, re-use, and development of buildings, as well as design guidelines for built and natural features. Coordinate with the host municipality to foster compatibility with land use plans and regulations for areas surrounding state reservations. | SPCOM/M | ST |

| Part VII: Objectives and Strategies for Rhode Island's Future Land Use | | | | |
|--|----|--|----------------|-------------|
| Infrastructure | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
| Goal | I. | Develop first class supporting infrastructure. Maximize public investment in existing capacity and enhance the distinction between urban and rural development while protecting the public’s health, safety, and welfare, promoting economic well-being, and preserving, and enhancing environmental quality. | | |
| Objective | A. | Maintain fully functional public water and sewer systems; focus development to maximize the investment in these community assets. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Evaluate the capacity of the existing systems to serve the planned build-out of the State's urban areas. | WRB/DEM/M/SPP | ST |
| | 2 | Identify and correct problems within the existing systems. Install all emergency connections and finalize all emergency agreements. | WRB/DEM/M | LT |
| | 3 | Identify where capacity exists for greater development intensity than currently planned for; evaluate capacity for the systems to serve major rehabilitation projects and proposed centers. | WRB/DEM/M | ST |
| | 4 | Upgrade and repair systems to serve the major planned redevelopment in urban areas, both rehabilitation and new developments. | WRB/DEM/M | LT |
| | 5 | Identify parts of existing service areas where upgrades of the water and sewer system is unfeasible or unsuitable and direct major development away from these areas. Revise land use plans and regulations accordingly. | WRB/DEM/CRMC/M | ST |
| | 6 | Establish overall development intensities for different areas based upon the availability of water as determined by water resource agency data and studies. | WRB/M | LT |
| Objective | B. | Protect drinking water supply resources. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Acquire control of and protect key resource areas in proximity to reservoirs, wellheads and aquifers supplying public drinking water, to protect both existing water systems and planned expansions for future supply. | WRB/DEM/DOH/M | ST/LT |
| | 2 | Guide significant development away from locations where it could cause serious ecological damage to the drinking water supply resources. Revise land use plans and regulations accordingly. | WRB/DEM/DOH/M | ST |
| | 3 | In the non-urban areas of the state, maintain the quality of the drinking water supply to rural centers, major uses, and concentrated clusters through a well-controlled system of community wells and small, well-designed public water systems. Limit the expansion of such systems to areas planned as higher density development centers to avoid sprawl. | WRB/DEM/DOH/M | O |
| Objective | C. | Avoid or mitigate significant negative environmental impacts from development. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Ensure that wastewater collection and treatment systems and facilities are properly maintained, operated, and upgraded or expanded in accordance with community plans, to reduce water quality impacts and accommodate desired focused growth within urban areas. | DEM/M | O |
| | 2 | In rural areas lacking public systems, ensure that wastewater management and land use policies are coordinated and mutually supportive. Provide that state of the art on-site treatment technologies are employed to facilitate focused growth within centers and other areas designated by community plans for higher intensity development. Limit the proliferation of advanced treatment systems (and development) in areas designated in community plans for preservation or open space. | DEM/M | O |
| | 3 | In areas without public wastewater treatment systems, ensure that wastewater is properly managed to protect and enhance water resources. Provide for the phase-out of existing cesspools and replacement with current technology, on-site systems, with priority for sensitive water resource areas. | DEM/WRB/M | O |
| | 4 | Focus development in higher density, mixed use centers served by transit and sidewalks to reduce the need for driving and help attain the state’s air quality goals (reduction of greenhouse gases and other automotive emissions). | DEM/M | O |
| Objective | D. | Map priority service expansion areas. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Identify priority areas for extension of public water and sewer service in order to support major economic development and concentrations of related uses in those centers with the most potential. | WRB/DEM/M | ST |
| | 2 | Identify the priority areas for extension of public water and sewer service in order to support development of traditional residential neighborhoods and development of larger-scaled residential developments. | WRB/DEM/M | ST |

| Infrastructure (continued) | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
|----------------------------|----|--|----------------|-------------|
| Objective | E. | Promote intermodal centers and greater reliance on transit. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Upgrade and maintain the 14 existing multi-modal terminals in the state with an aim of serving many more travelers. Plan and develop new multi-modal stations, particularly new and restored rail stations, to serve future demand. Plan for land use (transit oriented development) surrounding terminals and their auxiliary uses, to support the mass transportation use. Revise plans and regulations accordingly. | DOT/RIPTA/M | LT |
| | 2 | Support an effective, efficient intermodal transportation system connecting centers by providing transit-supportive features including extensive, connecting sidewalk and pathway networks, commuter parking, bus, taxi, and bicycle facilities. | DOT/M | LT/O |
| Objective | F. | Provide pedestrian connections through all centers and urban districts. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Require sidewalks in new development in all urban centers and neighborhoods. Particularly in commercial and mixed use districts, ensure safe pedestrian connections and discourage combinations of land uses or design features that cause pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. | M/DOT | O |
| | 2 | Encourage construction of infill sidewalks and pedestrian connections through capital improvement programs and during roadway or streetscape projects. | M/DOT | O |
| | 3 | Reduce the isolation of existing neighborhoods and facilities through enhanced pedestrian improvements in the form of sidewalks, traffic controls, and crosswalks. | M/DOT | O |
| | 4 | Discourage cul-de-sac street patterns in favor of interconnected streets that encourage walking. | M | O |
| Objective | G. | Maintain the functional integrity of existing and planned roadways. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Develop detailed, multi-community corridor plans particularly along state and interstate highways and around major intersections. Coordinate transportation and land use planning techniques and controls to upgrade and protect the character of the corridors. | SPP/M/DOT | ST |
| | 2 | Coordinate transportation and land use planning efforts in access management. Revise municipal land use regulations and state permitting procedures accordingly. | M/DOT/SPP | LT |
| | 3 | Evaluate the opportunities and issues presented by highway interchange areas and coordinate planning efforts to maximize economic benefits of the existing infrastructure and to promote uses that are complementary to the municipalities and the region. Minimize sprawl and environmental impacts of interchange development through land use controls. | M/DOT/SPP | ST |
| | 4 | Protect the character and quality of scenic roadways through coordination of municipal land use controls for areas adjacent to the roadways and state transportation planning for areas within the right-of-way. | M/DOT/SPP | ST |
| | 5 | Use land use plans and regulations to support ride-sharing, commuter parking, and mass transit in order to encourage alternatives to single occupant per vehicle commuting in all major developments and centers. | M/DOT/SPP | ST |
| | 6 | Restrict land uses that exacerbate traffic congestion and conflict and also separate land uses with different traffic and pedestrian characteristics. Provide for control of new development through municipal land use regulations to ensure compatibility of land use with transportation capacity and functions of roadways servicing it. Mitigate the transportation impacts of existing development through municipal planning and public improvement projects. | M/DOT/SPP | LT |

| Part VII: Objectives and Strategies for Rhode Island's Future Land Use | | | | |
|--|----|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| Implementation | | | *Lead Agencies | **Time Line |
| Goal | I. | Implement and maintain the vision. Continue to support public stewardship for land use through strategic public investments in growth centers, land conservation, development, and enhanced planning capacity at the local and regional levels. | | |
| Objective | A. | Reform Rhode Island's property tax system. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Participate in efforts to reform the existing Rhode Island property tax system, stressing it's negative impact on the land use decision making process. | GOV/GA/SPP/DOA/RIPEC/GSRI | ST |
| Objective | B | Require clear and current land use plans, and coordinated regulations to attain land use goals on a statewide, regional, and community level. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Enhance the state and municipal comprehensive planning system's ability to coordinate and clarify the land use plans, projects and regulations of the state agencies with those of the municipalities. | SPP/M | O |
| Objective | C. | Develop and maintain excellent land use information and technology systems. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Upgrade and maintain the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) as a centralized statewide database for all aspects of land use data and mapping. | DOA/SPP | O |
| | 2 | Upgrade the state and community information bases and technology systems to contain all pertinent land use data and to establish and maintain the capacity for effective information sharing. | DOA/M | O |
| | 3 | Promote establishment of electronic data and mapping systems at the state and community level and the transfer of all pertinent land use information to electronic systems. | DOA/M | ST |
| | 4 | Aim for parcel-based land use data for the entire state and all municipalities, to be shared through the RIGIS system. | DOA/M | ST |
| | 5 | Ensure that all state agencies and municipalities maintain current, mapped data identifying the areas and zones to which their regulations apply. | DOA/M | O |
| | 6 | Update state land use data every five years. | DOA/SPP/DEM | O |
| Objective | D. | Ensure that state and municipal planning officials are well-trained and properly supported. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Develop and maintain the professional capacity of state and municipal agencies with responsibility for land use planning, development, administration, zoning enforcement and building inspection, resource conservation, engineering, and public works. | DOA/SPP/RIAPA/GSRI | O |
| | 2 | Develop and maintain the technical capacity of citizen planning. | SPP/RIAPA/GSRI | O |
| Objective | E. | Update the state planning enabling legislation, as necessary, to maintain the contemporary and responsive foundation for state and municipal land management decisions. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Engage stakeholders in a thorough review and evaluation of the "Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act" and update, as necessary, to address such areas as electronic data and mapping, required elements, amendment procedures and required updates. | SPP/RIAPA/M | ST |
| | 2 | Evaluate the currency and effectiveness of the existing state enabling legislation for redevelopment and, where needed, recommend revisions to facilitate redevelopment and urban revitalization efforts. | SPP/RIAPA/M | ST |
| | 3 | Revisit the concept of "Projects of Regional Significance" and assess efficacy of establishing a process that provides for meaningful input by State and regional interests on major development projects that have impacts beyond those managed by local decision-making processes. | SPP/RIAPA/M | ST |
| Objective | F. | Achieve greater integration of state and municipal planning systems and support regional efforts. | | |
| Strategies | 1 | Update and revise requirements and review procedures for Community Comprehensive Plans. Plans should include maps illustrating existing and proposed future conditions for greenspace, community development and revitalization, infrastructure, and zoning/land use regulations. Consider requiring updated and extended community plans every ten years. | SPP/RIAPA/M | ST |
| | 2 | Evaluate, consolidate, simplify, and strengthen the State Guide Plan system to facilitate coordination among state agencies and the municipalities under direction of the State Planning Council. | SPP/M | ST |
| | 3 | Promote information-sharing and coordination of state agency plans and projects which pertain to land use, under the direction of the State Planning Council. | SPP/DEM/DOT/CRMC/WRB/HRC | O |